

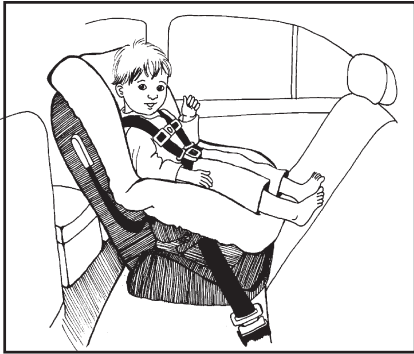
# Car Safety for Growing Babies

## From 4 to 18 Months

**Child  
Safety  
Facts**  
**2005**

### Keep baby facing the rear until at least age 1

The American Academy of Pediatrics advises parents to keep babies facing the rear while riding in a car until **at least** age 1.



*Toddler riding rear-facing*

The rear-facing position is safest. The sloping back of the baby's seat supports his or her large head and weak neck. This reduces the chance of serious spinal injuries in a crash.

A premature baby should stay rear-facing until at least 12 months from his or her original due date and to at least 20 pounds.

### As your baby grows bigger

**Use a car seat that fits his weight and height.** A baby is likely to outgrow an infant-only seat before age 1. When baby outgrows it, move baby into a convertible seat. Use it facing the rear. See page 2 for more about choosing the next car seat for your child.

**Keep your baby rear-facing after age 1**, if she or he is less than 20 pounds.

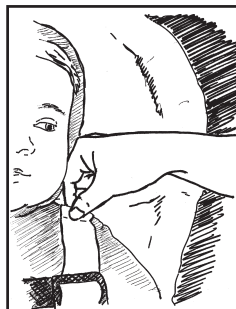
Most convertible seats can hold a 30- to 35-pound child facing the rear (see instructions and labels). A toddler can ride rear-facing to the upper **rear-facing** weight limit for the car seat model, or until baby's head gets to one inch below the top of the seat.

A toddler can sit more upright than a newborn. Babies with long legs may cross them or rest them against the vehicle seat back. This is not likely to cause leg injury. Facing a baby forward too soon is much more risky.

**Put the harness straps in the slots** at or just below your baby's shoulders in the rear-facing position.

**Adjust the harness** to fit snugly, so you cannot pinch any slack at the shoulder (see picture, right). If your baby can lean forward, the harness should be tighter.

**Avoid bundling** your baby in thick blankets or a bulky snowsuit. These make it impossible to get the harness snug enough to hold him in a crash. Adjust the straps. Then put a blanket **over**, not under, the straps.



*Pinching strap to find out if there is any slack.*

### The Basics

- Use a rear-facing car seat (child safety seat) for your baby up to at least age 1.
- Buckle up your baby in the back seat. The back seat is safer for all children.
- **Air Bag Warning:** Never put your baby in the front seat with a passenger air bag unless the air bag is turned off.
- Read and follow the car seat instructions and vehicle owner's manual.
- Fasten the harness over your baby's shoulders and make it snug. The straps should hug but not squeeze your baby.
- Install the car seat with a seat belt or new LATCH attachments (if both car seat and vehicle have LATCH). Tighten the seat belt or LATCH.

### Resources:

- National Auto Safety Hotline, 888-DASH-2-DOT or 800-424-9153 (tty), [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)
- SafetyBeltSafe Helpline, 800-745-SAFE (7233); Frequently Asked Questions, [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)
- To find a local car seat inspection station: [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org), 866-SEATCHECK (866-732-8243)
- Other useful websites: [www.aap.org/parents.html](http://www.aap.org/parents.html)  
[www.saferidenews.com](http://www.saferidenews.com)

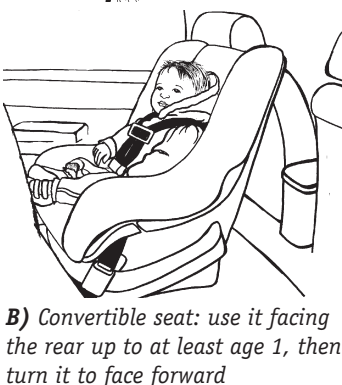
*Make  
Every Ride  
A Safe Ride*



## Choosing a Car Seat for a Bigger Baby

The “best car seat” is one that fits your baby and fits into your vehicle securely.

**A) Infant-only seat:**  
use up to 20 to 22 pounds



**B) Convertible seat:** use it facing the rear up to at least age 1, then turn it to face forward

### An infant-only car seat (A) is too small for your baby

when baby is over the upper weight limit on the seat or baby's head is 1 inch or less below the top of the car seat shell. Move baby to a bigger seat.

**A convertible car seat is bigger (B).** Get one with a rear-facing upper weight limit of 30 to 35 pounds. Use it rear-facing until at least age 1, longer if possible. Turn it to face forward if baby reaches the rear-facing upper weight limit.

**Try any new car seat in your vehicle** before you buy. Make sure it fits and can be tightly installed. Try a convertible seat in both rear-facing and forward-facing positions in the

back seat. Also check how easily you can adjust the harness when it is buckled in place. If you have problems, return the seat and try another.

## Warnings:

**Forward-facing child seats (C)** are only suitable for children **over age 1**. Some are labeled for a child weighing as little 20 to 22 pounds. If you have a baby under age 1 who has reached that weight, do not move him to a forward-facing seat before his first birthday.

**Second-hand seats:** Avoid getting a used car seat if possible, especially one more than 6 to 8 years old, because:

- It may be missing instructions or important parts.
- It may have been recalled.
- It may not protect as well as newer car seats.
- It might have been used in a crash. A car seat used in a crash should be replaced, not used again.



**C) Forward-facing seat:** use **ONLY** over age 1



**D) Air bag impact** could kill an infant

## Installing a Car Seat

Install the car seat tightly. It should move no more than 1 inch when you pull the base forward and side-to-side. It is okay for a rear-facing car seat to tip toward the back of the vehicle.

### • Using a seat belt

Buckle the belt through the correct belt path. Press down on the baby's seat while tightening the belt. You do not need to use super-human force. Different belt systems are tightened differently. Check the owner's manual and labels on seat belts.

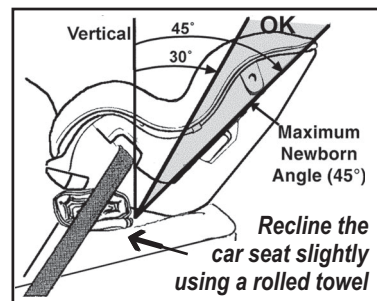
### • Using LATCH anchors

Your car seat may have the LATCH system to attach it to a vehicle without using a seat belt. This system may be easier and give you a tighter installation. However, if it does not make the car seat secure in the car, use the seat belt instead.

Read the owner's manual to find out if your vehicle has LATCH. Follow the car seat and vehicle instructions for how to use LATCH.

### Reclining the baby

Use the recline adjuster on the base of the car seat if it has one. Many car seats have a line or gauge to show you the correct recline angle.



An older baby can safely sit more upright than a newborn infant can. This is because his back and neck are much stronger.

## Air Bag Danger for Babies!

The back seat is safer for all passengers.

A baby riding in front with an air bag is in great danger. The air bag could cause death if it hits the back of the car seat (D).

Does your vehicle have a passenger air bag? Look for a warning label on the visor and markings on the dashboard (Air Bag, SRS, or SIR). The vehicle manual will also tell you.

A sports car or pickup truck may not have a back seat or enough space for a rear-facing car seat. Many have an air bag on/off switch. Put a baby or child in front **only** if the air bag has been turned off. (Turn it on again for adult passengers.)